

## **Sarah Maret**

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From: Sarah Maret <smaret@www.dalton.k12.ga.us>  
To: fdd-pst@fns.usda.gov  
Subject: FD2000 (USDA Proposal for Change  
Date: Friday, April 28, 2000 2:09 PM

Following are my comments concerning the re-engineering of the Food Distribution Program. All changes should be for the improvement of the overall program and not for the minority. I was not asked to evaluate the FDP and if I had been given that opportunity would have been glad to do so. I have been pleased with the program in Georgia and believe that the program works well because of the leadership. If other states are having problems, those problems need to be addressed on the state level.

I want no changes made to the existing FDP that will in any way reduce the quality of food or compromise the safety of the food that is received by my system. Local schools do not need increased food costs either.

1. Expand the use of long-term contracts.  
I am not opposed to expanding the use of long-term contracts, however, I am concerned about transferring storage to vendors. All commercial vendors will charge for storage and this increased cost will be passed on to the users which is ultimately the local school system.
3. Update product specification  
Product specifications should conform to industry pack size. However, school systems have to make sure that nutrient content is consistent with the Healthy School Meal Initiative. Children will not accept food if it does not taste good or if it looks different.
4. Allow vendors to use commercial labels.  
I oppose this proposed change completely. USDA products are easily recognizable and this helps the local food service employees keep up with inventory and usage. Changing to a commercial label will place a tremendous burden on those actually using the foods and I see no reason for that. Local systems do not believe that the "generic labels imply a lower quality." We use the products and know that the foods are high quality, first grade items. If USDA believes the food is of a lower quality then we really do have problems.
6. Expand full substitutability of commodity product.  
Opposed to this proposal. I do not even want to imagine what kinds of problems will occur if this is allowed!
12. Provide computer connectivity to the school district level.  
Sounds wonderful, but technology is changing so rapidly and school systems don't have the financial resources to stay current. Our system has had problems just connecting to our state agency and just this week, my line was out for 5 days. We still don't have all local schools on line. We also don't have enough staff to monitor computer messages on a hourly basis. What kind of hardware and software would be needed and at what cost?
14. Work with states and partners to pilot-test improvements.

I understand that there are already nine pilots approved or in operation. How were these selected and will the results be published? I would hope that all states and/or systems be given the opportunity to apply for pilots and that those selected would be representative of all size schools and localities.

16. Streamline paperwork and reporting requirements.

Excellent. However, I have worked for over 15 years and have never seen any actual paperwork reduction in any federal program. We may not have to report as often, but documentation must still be kept.

I will also mail a copy of these comments to the FD2000 Project Coordinator.

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